

JANUARY 28, 1976

THE VISION OF SOLERI

ANNCR: AND NOW THE VOICE OF AMERICA PRESENTS DATELINE ... ANOTHER IN THE SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. TODAY OUR DATELINE IS RAW LAND IN THE SOUTHWESTERN STATE OF ARIZONA, WHERE AN ITALIAN ARCHITECT IS CREATING A VISION THAT'S EXCITING ARTISTS AND BUILDERS AROUND THE WORLD. HERE IS _____ WITH VOA CORRESPONDENT EDWIN GORDON'S REPORT.

VOICE: IT'S A LANDSCAPE OF STARK BEAUTY -- CACTUS AND RED CLAY, SHARP CLIFFS AND MOUNTAINS HAZY BLUE IN THE DISTANCE. AND THE LONG STRETCH OF A CRYSTAL SKY ABOVE. THEY CALL THIS PART OF ARIZONA THE BIG SKY COUNTRY, AND IT SHOULD BE FAMILIAR TO LOVERS OF WESTERN MOVIES. BUT ABOUT ONE HUNDRED KILOMETERS NORTH OF PHOENIX -- THE STATE CAPITAL -- THERE'S A NEW IMAGE NOW: TORN UP EARTH, CONSTRUCTION MATERIALS STREWN ABOUT, AND THE BUILDINGS THEMSELVES -- HALF FINISHED, SOARING UP IN GRACEFUL ARCHES, COLORED WITH THE COLOR OF THE LAND ITSELF.

THIS IS THE DREAM OF PAOLO SOLERI, A DIMINUTIVE ITALIAN ARCHITECT WHO CAN BE SEEN SUPERVISING THE CONSTRUCTION, DRESSED IN SHORTS, TEE-SHIRT AND SANDALS. AT FIRST IT WAS ONLY A DREAM, ONE HE HAD SPELLED OUT IN HIS BOOK "ARCOLOGY: THE CITY IN THE IMAGE OF MAN." ARCOLOGY -- A WEDDING OF ARCHITECTURE AND ECOLOGY, IN WHICH, ACCORDING TO SOLERI, THE STRUCTURES RISE FREE OF THE LAND AND

VOICE:

(CONT'D) RESPECT THE LAND. / THE LATE FRANK LLOYD WRIGHT HAD HIS

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CONCEPT OF "ORGANIC" ARCHITECTURE, BUT SOLERI HAS GONE FAR BEYOND THAT. AND HAS GAINED HIS DISCIPLES AND HIS CRITICS.

LET'S LOOK CLOSELY AT ONE ARCH, MADE OF CONCRETE POURED OVER SCULPTURED MOUNDS OF EARTH -- THE EARTH THEN REMOVED. AND DECORATED WITH THE MUTED BROWNS, OCHERS AND EARTH GOLDS MADE FROM RIVER SILT APPLIED TO THE CONCRETE. BY ITSELF -- IF NOTHING MORE EVER HAPPENED -- THIS ARCH WOULD BE A WORK OF ART, A MONUMENT OF SOME KIND, SWINGING ELEVEN METERS INTO THE AIR. BUT IT IS ONLY PART OF THE PLANNED THIRTY-STORY STRUCTURE SOLERI HAS IN HIS BLUEPRINTS. WHEN IT'S FINISHED, THE COMPLEX -- COVERING FOUR HECTARES -- WILL BE ABLE TO HOUSE THREE THOUSAND PEOPLE. IN ADDITION TO THE APARTMENT DWELLINGS, THE COMPLEX -- ONE BUILDING, IN REALITY -- WILL HAVE SHOPS AND WORK AREAS, A RESTAURANT, A STONE GARDEN BLENDING INTO THE LANDSCAPE. ALREADY A FOUNDRY AND A CERAMICS STUDIO ARE IN USE, HELPING WITH THE CONSTRUCTION OF THE OTHER ELEMENTS.

WHEN WILL THE VISION COME FULLY ALIVE? THAT COULD TAKE YEARS. SOLERI WORKS FROM MONTH TO MONTH, FROM AN ARTIST'S GRANT HERE, A DONATION THERE. HE HAS HIS CRITICS WHO DO NOT QUITE KNOW WHAT TO MAKE OF HIS WORK. ONE ARCHITECT SAYS SOLERI'S PLANS ARE TECHNOLOGICALLY UNSOUND. ANOTHER DESCRIBES THE CONCEPT AS A BEEHIVE FOR PEOPLE -- NICE TO LOOK AT, HE SAYS, BUT I WOULDN'T WANT TO LIVE THERE.

VOICE:

(CONT'D) BUT SOLERI ALSO HAS HIS STUDENTS -- OF ALL AGES AND BACKGROUNDS -- WHO COME TO WORK AS SKILLED LABORERS AND AS APPRENTICES, AND WHO PAY FOR THE PRIVILEGE. THEY PAY TO LISTEN TO THE WEEKLY LECTURES OF THE MASTER, TO HEAR MORE OF SOLERI'S VISIONS AND TO PUZZLE OVER HIS METAPHYSICS. THEY PAY TO GET THEIR ARMS AND LEGS SORE FROM THE HEAVY CARRYING AND THE RUDE SUN. AND THEY PAY TO TAKE PART IN THE DREAM.

IF SOLERI HAD LET IT REST WITH HIS PRINTED WORKS -- AND HE HAS, FOR EXAMPLE, OUTLINED ONE FUTURISTIC METROPOLIS WHICH HE CALLS BABELNOAH AND WHICH WOULD HOUSE SIX MILLION PEOPLE -- HIS IDEAS STILL WOULD HAVE BEEN A MATTER OF WONDER AND CONTENTION. BUT HE INSISTS -- IN ARIZONA -- ON FULFILLING HIS DREAMS IN THREE-DIMENSIONAL REALITY. SOMEDAY, YOU THINK, PEOPLE MIGHT ACTUALLY BE LIVING THERE. AND YOU THINK AGAIN -- WHY, THEY ALREADY ARE.

ANNCR: CITY -- A VERY DIFFERENT KIND OF CITY -- IN THE SUN ... PAOLO SOLERI'S VISION. THIS HAS BEEN DATELINE, ANOTHER IN THE VOA SERIES OF PROGRAMS ABOUT PEOPLE, PLACES AND EVENTS IN THE UNITED STATES. JOIN US AGAIN NEXT _____ (AT THIS TIME) FOR ANOTHER ... DATELINE. THIS IS _____.